

Appendix 6(d): Transit Agency Meeting Summary

When the legislature drafted a budget proviso (ESSB 5352) directing WSDOT to conduct an express toll lane study for the Eastside Corridor, the project team followed an approach similar to the I-405 Corridor Master Plan. The following proviso language indicated the legislature wanted WSDOT to engage the public as well as Eastside Corridor mayors and city councils in the planning process:

- i. Confer with the mayors and city councils of jurisdictions in the vicinity of the project regarding the implementation of high occupancy toll lanes and the impacts that the implementation of these high occupancy toll lanes might have on the operation of the corridor and adjacent local streets;*
- ii. Conduct public work sessions and open houses to provide information to citizens regarding implementation of high occupancy toll lanes and to solicit citizen views;*
- iii. Regularly report to the Washington transportation commission regarding the progress of the study for the purpose of guiding the commission's toll setting on the facility; and*
- iv. Provide a report to the governor and the legislature by January 2010.*

Transit Agency Subgroup Meeting Timeline

6/4/09	IWG Meeting #1
7/23/09	IWG Meeting #2 Transit White Paper
10/13/09	Transit Subgroup Meeting #1
10/20/09	IWG Meeting #3
11/4/09	Transit Subgroup Meeting #2 Draft transit principles
12/3/09	IWG Meeting #4

Advisory committee structure similar to I-405 Corridor Master Plan

During the I-405 corridor Master Plan process, WSDOT engaged corridor leaders by convening an Executive Committee, with a subgroup on Funding and Phasing, and a Steering Committee of local, resource and transit agency staff who could study the issues in more depth and brief executives. One Master Plan goal was to have equal participation and commitment from all decision makers – the same held true during the 2009 Eastside Corridor Express Toll Lanes Study.

For the 2009 study, WSDOT formed the Executive Advisory Group (EAG) from corridor-wide mayors, county leadership, and transit agency executives. The Interagency Working Group (IWG) served as the staff committee, much like the Steering Committee previously. Because of their focused interest on access and other transit-related issues, the representatives from King County Metro Transit, Community Transit, and Sound Transit worked with WSDOT to form a transit subgroup to the IWG.

Transit agency subgroup reaffirms long-term vision for BRT in the Corridor

The established meeting objective was to identify transit principles and a vision for the I-405 express toll lanes. The long-term vision for the corridor remains to operate a bus rapid transit (BRT) system with frequent headways as discussed in the Master Plan. The Master Plan also includes a network of direct access interchanges at Park and Ride lots, major freeway interchanges and other key locations that would allow BRT to operate exclusively within the express toll lane system.

Ongoing discussion will continue on the interim steps needed to achieve this vision, evolving with each infrastructure and funding step towards the Master Plan. A critical mass of inline stations and other improvements may be needed before the beginnings of the BRT vision can be realized. However, each step taken now should build towards the ultimate vision.

Through a series of two workshop meetings, the transit agencies agreed on a principal goal that ideally, the Eastside Corridor (I-405 and SR 167) would provide reliable mobility by preserving and enhancing reliable and safe transit pathways. Put another way, the express toll lane system will seek to maximize transit service reliability and provide improved travel options for vanpools, carpools, and toll-paying customers.

The transit agencies also wanted to make sure that current HOV lane policies, which prioritize transit use, stay intact for the express toll lanes. The agencies agree that the state's HOV lane system is not meeting performance targets to operate at 45 mph 90% of the time. The agencies understand the need to move to a sustainable system that can improve the travel experience of a broad group of users, such as express toll lanes.

WSDOT and transit agencies discuss access priorities and challenges

The access point discussion began with a review by WSDOT of how the preliminary access points studied in the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study were determined. The main criteria for locations access points were to accommodate major traffic patterns, access to interstates and main state routes, provide access to Park and Ride lots and to city centers.

From this base, the group walked through the plans for I-405 to identify challenges and opportunities to refine the preliminary access points. Over the two meetings, the group identified 14 potential improvements that would improve transit's ability to operate effectively. The list included ramp shoulder transit lanes, new access points, direct access facilities, and enhanced transit shoulders.

The transit agencies have stated that they will only support an Eastside Corridor express toll lane system if it "includes ingress and egress points such that routes currently operating in the HOV lanes will be able to make full use of the HOT lanes following conversion."

Transit Agency Subgroup Meeting Agendas

10/13/09 Transit Subgroup Meeting #1

- Introductions & agreement on objectives
- Agreement on Eastside Corridor vision
- What are the key issues?
- Develop Eastside Corridor express toll lanes principles of access
- Identify types of transit service utilizing express toll lanes
- Identify challenges & solutions to access points on I-405/SR 520 to I-5 Project
- Wrap up & next steps

11/4/09 Transit Subgroup Meeting #2

- Review action items
- Review I-405/SR 520 to I-5 Project access point priorities
- Identify challenges & solutions to access points for I-405/SR 520 to I-5 Project express toll lanes
- Develop draft transit principles for the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study
- Wrap up & next steps

Transit agencies draft their own principles for Eastside Corridor express toll lanes

In addition to the access workshops, the Transit Subgroup focused on drafting transit-related implementation principles to be included in the overall tolling study. The final Eastside Corridor Tolling Study includes a full list of implementation principles finalized by the EAG, which incorporates many, but not all, of the transit principles. The transit principles developed and submitted to WSDOT by King County Metro, Sound Transit, and Community Transit are attached to this summary. In addition, letters from each of these transit agencies which more fully explain their views and concerns with implementation of express toll lanes on the Eastside Corridor are also attached to this summary.

WSDOT and transit agencies will continue working together

WSDOT and the Transit Subgroup agencies will continue dialogue on the access issues and express toll lanes final design. Ultimately, the goal of the Eastside Corridor express toll lanes system is to make progress towards achieving the corridor master plan vision for congestion relief, added capacity, managed lanes, and bus rapid transit. All preliminary and future final express toll lane designs must be compatible with the Corridor Master Plan.

While the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study report is due to the Legislature in January 2010, the discussion between agencies will continue. One of the next steps is for all members of the subgroup to evaluate and refine the 14 potential improvements to determine the feasibility and priority of each option. WSDOT is committed to working with the transit agencies to determine access solutions which will work with current transit routes while also designing for the long term vision.

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study Principles

Problem Statement: The Eastside Corridor is congested and is not addressing the mobility needs of people and goods. The HOV lane system is not operating at a speed of 45 miles per hour and does not operate reliably.

Eastside Corridor Definition: WSDOT to provide

Vision: Improve mobility for people and goods in the Eastside Corridor

We want the Eastside Toll corridor project to (Project Goal): improve personal mobility and travel reliability by managing congestion in the corridor

To achieve our goal, in implementing an Eastside Toll corridor, we will: (Objectives)

- Optimize performance of existing facilities
- Maintain HOV system commitment to prioritize speed and reliability of transit and other high-occupancy vehicles
- Manage congestion in order to maintain speed of at least 45 mph in the managed lanes

Rules to guide us in our actions (Principles):

Transit Operations

- Express toll lanes will be designed and managed to promote transit speed, reliability, and safety - ie. management of lanes should support target traffic flow, which should influence carpool designation; design should facilitate safe transit movement and access to key stops, stations and transit centers
- An effective managed lane system will accommodate existing transit service or provide adequate alternative priority pathways

HOV Express Toll Lane Operation

- HOV designation will be established and possibly changed from 2+ to 3+ in order to ensure that free-flow speeds are maintained in the express toll lanes.

Finance

- Toll revenue collected in the Eastside corridor will fund projects and operations in the corridor
- Funding options in addition to tolls will be explored to fund Eastside Corridor projects
- Options to reduce the cost of bonding will be explored.

Steps we will take to achieve our goal and objectives (Strategies):

- Identify program of feasible transit improvements to accommodate existing service and support future transit service expansion
- Invest toll revenue to improve mobility in corridor, including the option to fund transit service
- Exempt transit and high occupancy vehicles from tolls
- Ensure that transit has a reliable pathway on which to operate
- Ensure that transit operations are not degraded compared to operations today, in terms of access, speed and travel time
- Develop interim solution towards implementation of the I-405 master plan which includes BRT service, supported by direct access facilities, transit centers and park and rides.
- Coordinate with the transit agencies to design safe and reliable access to the express lane system

Eastside Toll Corridor Project -- SR 167 and I-405
A King County Metro Transit Perspective

Prepared for:
Eastside Corridor Tolling Study
Interagency Working Group

Prepared by:
King County Metro Transit

July 2009



Summary

The establishment of an Eastside Toll Corridor along SR 167 and I-405 can help improve the efficiency of the highway system, manage travel demand, and raise revenue for transportation investments. High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes and similar approaches to roadway management are an important next step in maintaining the performance of the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) system. A working HOV system plays a critical role in regional mobility by ensuring faster, predictable travel times for transit and high occupancy vehicles, thereby encouraging travelers to use those modes that are more efficient and cost-effective for the overall transportation system. The design and management of toll facilities has a large impact on the benefits that can be derived for transit and HOVs. As the Eastside Toll corridor is further explored, the project should maintain a commitment to regional transit mobility. This can be achieved by designing and operating facilities to optimize transit movement and access, allowing toll revenues to be used to fund transit operation, and exempting transit vehicles from toll payment.

System Pricing for Multiple Goals

King County supports the use of both general tolling and High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes to manage congested highways, generate revenue to construct, maintain and operate the transportation system, and promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Limited available funding for transportation combined with growing travel demand increasingly strains the transportation system. Mobility will depend on the region's ability to maximize system efficiency and effectiveness by encouraging an HOV system with more people who utilize ridersharing options, rather than driving alone. Therefore, any tolling scenario must maintain a continued commitment to providing an advantage to transit and high occupancy vehicle travel.

The Role of the HOV System

HOV lanes have been a successful tool to increase the efficiency of the highway system and move people quickly and reliably. As the Transportation Research Board states, the primary goal of HOV facilities are to provide buses, carpools, and vanpools with travel time savings and reliability over congested general purpose lanes, thereby encouraging individuals to choose a higher occupancy mode over driving alone.¹ Ridesharing makes more efficient use of limited roadway space since the person movement capacity of the roadway is increased when more people are carried in fewer vehicles. In the Puget Sound region, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has observed that the HOV lanes move over one-third of the people traveling on freeways during peak periods in only 19 percent of the vehicles. The average HOV lane carries more than 1½ times as many people as the average "regular" lane during the peak commuting periods while saving travel time² for those that rideshare and reducing transit's operating cost.

HOV System Overcrowding

The success of the HOV system is due to the travel time advantage and the reliability that HOV lanes provide by limiting their use to vehicles that carry more than two people.

¹ Source: http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_95c2.pdf

² <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/hov/>

Even with this restriction, portions of the 2+ HOV system³ are at or above capacity for significant periods of the each day. Congestion in HOV lanes reduces or eliminates any speed and reliability advantage over traveling in general purpose lanes. According to current performance targets, HOV lanes should operate at 45 mph or above at least 90 percent of the time. Along the Eastside corridor, the following segments of I-405 are not meeting established performance targets:

- Northbound Renton to Bellevue (AM)
- Northbound Bellevue to Bothell area (PM)
- Southbound Bellevue to Renton (PM)

Poorly performing HOV lanes negatively impact transit service by decreasing service quality and increasing costs. Extra time is required in bus schedules to account for increased congestion during peak periods. Congested conditions also add to schedule variability, as some days transit travels faster than others. This significantly affects transit performance since it is challenging for transit to adhere to a published schedule. The advantage of HOV lanes is diminished or eliminated when they are over capacity, creating discussion about how HOV lanes might be managed and operated differently⁴. King County maintains that the HOV system needs to be managed aggressively with a focus on retaining a reliable speed advantage for transit and high occupancy vehicles.

HOT Lanes as a Management Tool

One management option would be to increase the HOV system occupancy requirement to three or more people per vehicle. If implemented systemwide, this approach would create other transportation challenges by directing many two-person carpools to the general-purpose lanes. More cars in the general purpose lanes could exacerbate congestion in certain areas and leave the HOV lanes underutilized in other locations.

Another management option would be dynamically-tolled HOT lanes. This option could optimize person-throughput on the HOV system by maintaining priority for transit and high occupancy vehicles while allowing other vehicles the option to pay to use excess capacity. For an Eastside toll corridor to be effective, a two-lane managed system is the best approach since there is no capacity left to sell during peak periods on certain segments.

Maintaining a Commitment to Transit

As the Eastside Toll corridor is further defined, King County Metro would like to ensure that the following principles are recognized in order to maintain priority for transit:

➤ **Facility design and operation must maintain a travel time advantage for transit**

Two critical elements to maintaining a travel time advantage for transit are safe and adequate ingress and egress from the HOV system and guaranteed performance of managed lanes.

³ 2+ means that there must be at least 2 occupants in a vehicle to qualify to use the HOV lane.

⁴ http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/1DD5EFC3-0540-4496-A976DD943565B0D9/0/03_CRA2_Report_Jan09.pdf

Ingress and Egress

Transit must be able to safely enter and exit the HOT lanes, while maintaining access to key transit stops and stations. HOT lanes will not boost transit performance if transit cannot access them appropriately. As design moves forward, transit agencies must be included in discussion of where access points are located. Supporting infrastructure, such as direct access ramps and freeway-to-freeway connections will also improve transit access and ability to use the system. In areas where the ingress and egress points cannot be adequately located to facilitate transit movement, another option would be to exempt transit from the restriction of crossing the double white line. At other points in the system, transit use of the shoulder or outside HOV lanes could provide an alternative to HOT lane access.

Operational Objectives

A priority in HOT lane operation should be the speed and reliability of transit and HOV travel. Operation of a toll facility must not detract from transit service quality. The focus should be on maintaining the flow of traffic and ensuring that the toll lanes are not oversold to the point where these lanes are congested and performance degrades.

- **Revenue must be provided to support expanded transit service by authorizing the use of toll revenues for operations, maintenance and capital investments in related parts of the transportation system, including transit.**

If tolls are implemented, demand for transit will increase, as people seek ways to avoid paying them. Transit provides an alternative to driving and paying a toll, offering choices for all travelers and mitigating the impacts of tolling on lower income populations. Transit also plays an important role in system efficiency by moving a high number of people.

Currently there are no funds identified to increase service in response to projected toll-induced demand. In the analysis of the SR 520 corridor where the Urban Partnership program outlines a comprehensive plan to reduce congestion that includes tolling and transit along with technology and telecommuting, transit ridership is predicted to increase by as much as 35 percent. If demand for transit increased on the Eastside Corridor by 15 to 20 percent, just half that amount, the need to increase service would be significant.

- **Transit must be exempted from tolls**

Tolling transit will impose an additional operating cost on Metro and other transit agencies. Given that transit agencies will already be facing pressure to respond to toll-induced demand with limited resources, the added cost of tolls will only exacerbate the problem. The cost will be incurred by the public through service reductions, fare increases, or other cost cutting measures. Making transit exempt from tolls will be essential unless sufficient funding from toll revenue is directed toward transit to compensate for the added cost.



December 22, 2009

Kim Henry
WSDOT
I-405 Project Director
600 108th Avenue NE, Suite 405
Bellevue, WA 98004

Dear Kim:

This letter is in regard to WSDOT's Eastside I-405/SR 167 corridor express tolling study.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the study of express toll lanes on the I-405/SR 167 corridor. We appreciate WSDOT's efforts to improve person mobility, reliability and speed in the corridor.

We share a principal goal with Community Transit, King County Metro Transit and Sound Transit to provide reliable person mobility in the Eastside corridor. In order to accomplish this, transit mobility must be preserved and enhanced by providing reliable and safe transit pathways to enter, exit and operate in the express toll lanes to serve riders.

To that end, we have worked with our transit partners to develop the following transit principles which we feel are critical to the successful implementation of express toll lanes in the Eastside corridor. The entire list of principles is attached separately.

Transit Principles—summary

- Express toll lanes will be designed and managed to promote transit speed, reliability and safety, i.e. management of the lanes should support target traffic flow which should influence carpool designation; design should facilitate safe transit movements and access to key stops, stations and transit centers.
- Exempt transit and high occupancy vehicles from tolls.
- Ensure that transit has a reliable pathway on which to operate.
- Ensure that transit operations are not degraded compared to operations today, in terms of access, speed, reliability and travel time.
- Ensure that a minimum speed of 45 miles per hour is maintained in the express toll lanes at least 90% of the time, including 90% of the peak period.
- Continue working with the transit agencies to design and implement alternative access points, auxiliary lanes and other transit improvements where proposed access points will not work for transit operations.
- As a key component of corridor person-carrying capacity, transit service shall be an eligible recipient of toll revenue.

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King County Councilmember

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Joni Earl

The transit agencies can only support express toll lanes if there is a commitment by WSDOT to meet the 45 mph / 90% performance standard. This may require that the HOV designation be changed from 2+ to 3+.

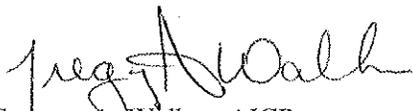
In addition, we can only support express toll lanes if the design includes ingress and egress points such that routes currently operating in the HOV lanes will be able to make full use of the HOT lanes following conversion. Currently proposed designs will need to be modified to ensure that they provide for effective transit operations. Where engineering constraints preclude critical transit access points, alternative pathways such as shoulder transit lanes should be considered.

We stress the importance of collaborating with us in further developing designs for the toll corridor. We encourage continued dialogue that builds on the discussions we had as part of this study to ensure that facilities will safely accommodate transit movement.

In addition, we propose the development of a Memorandum of Agreement between all affected transit agencies and WSDOT to formalize the principles and commitments identified in this letter.

Please contact us if you would like to discuss these principles further. The full set of principles is attached, along with a copy of a discussion paper identifying transit issues related to toll corridor implementation. We look forward to working with you as WSDOT moves forward with the implementation of express tolling in the Eastside Corridor.

Sincerely,



Gregory A. Walker, AICP
Director, Office of Planning & Development
Attachments

Cc Kevin Desmond, General Manager, King County Metro Transit
Joyce Eleanor, CEO, Community Transit
Joni Earl, CEO, Sound Transit



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Joyce Eleanor
Chief Executive Officer

December 24, 2009

Kim Henry
WSDOT
I-405 Project Director
600 108th Avenue NE, Suite 405
Bellevue, WA 98004

Dear Kim:

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The affected transit agencies: Community Transit, King County Metro Transit and Sound Transit share a principal goal to provide reliable person mobility in the Eastside corridor. In order to accomplish this, transit mobility must be preserved and enhanced by providing reliable and safe transit pathways to enter, exit and operate in the express toll lanes to serve riders.

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- Ensure that a minimum speed of 45 miles per hour is maintained in the express toll lanes at least 90% of the time, including 90% of the peak period.
- Continue working with the transit agencies to design and implement alternative access points, auxiliary lanes and other transit improvements where proposed access points will not work for transit operations.
- As a key component of corridor person-carrying capacity, transit service shall be an eligible recipient of toll revenue.

The transit agencies can only support express toll lanes if there is a commitment by WSDOT to operate the express toll lanes at a minimum of 45 mph at least 90% of the time, including 90% of the peak period. This may require that the HOV designation be changed from 2+ to 3+.

In addition, the transit agencies can only support express toll lanes if the design includes ingress and egress points such that routes currently operating in the HOV lanes will be able to make full use of the HOT lanes following conversion. Currently proposed designs will need to be modified to ensure that they

provide for effective transit operations. Where engineering constraints preclude critical transit access points, alternative pathways such as shoulder transit lanes should be considered.

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Sincerely,



Joy Munkers
Director of Planning and Development

Attachments

Cc Joyce Eleanor, CEO, Community Transit
Kevin Desmond, General Manager, King County Metro Transit
Joni Earl, CEO, Sound Transit