Washington State Department of Transportation

I-405 Steering Committee Meeting Summary

April 24, 2003

The following is a summary of presentations given, issues raised, actions undertaken or recommendations made. When possible, lengthy discussions have been summarized into themes or summary statements.

Steering Committee Members Present:

☑ Peter Beaulieu PSRC	❑ Sandra Meyer City of Renton	☑ Kate Stensberg U.S. Army Corps
☑ Jim Leonard FHWA	❑ Mick Monken City of Woodinville	☑ Bernard Van deKamp of Bellevue
☑ Brian O'Sullivan Sound Transit	❑ Bill Barlow Community Transit	☑ Leonard Newstrum Yarrow Point
❑ Jonathan Freedman U.S. EPA	❑ Deb Cornett WA Fish & Wildlife	❑ Terry Marpert City of Redmond
☑ Jim Arndt City of Kirkland	☑ Nick Afzali City of Renton	☑ Eddie Low City of Bothell
❑ Nancy Brennan-Dubbs U.S. Fish & Wildlife	☑ Ann Martin King County	❑ John Witmer FTA
☑ Kurt Buchanan WA Fish & Wildlife	❑ Kim Becklund City of Bellevue	❑ Seyed Safavian City of Bothell
❑ Mitch Wasserman City of Clyde Hill	❑ Bob Sokol City of Kenmore	❑ Don Wickstrom City of Kent
❑ Bill Vlcek City of Lynnwood	❑ Debra Symmonds City of Mercer Island	❑ Fritz Timm City of Newcastle
☑ Therese Swanson WA Dept. of Ecology	❑ Sharon Griffin Hunts Point	❑ Jim Morrow City of Tukwila
❑ Dan Burke Port of Seattle	❑ Paul Carr PSCAA	❑ Barbara Gilliland Sound Transit
❑ Chuck Chappell FHWA	❑ Allyson Brooks WA Dept. CT&E	❑ David Hirsch NOAA Fisheries

Staff and Observers
David Hull, King County

Project Management Team
Craig Stone, WSDOT
Christina Martinez, WSDOT
Don Samdahl, Mirai Associates

Hank Peters, consultant

Steve Quinn, HNTB

Keith McGowan, McGowan Environmental
Michael Richards, PRR
Joel Marcuson, Jacobs Ray

Kim Henry, WSDOT

CALL TO ORDER
Mr. Stone called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m., and reviewed the agenda for today:

1. Funding
2. Managed lanes update
3. Option C Refinements

Project Update
Stone started the meeting noting that the Senate has approved $485 million for the I-405 project, with money for Renton, Kirkland, and Bellevue area, based on the nickel gas tax proposal. The House has proposed $200 million for I-405 funding, with $185 million proposed for Bellevue and $15 million for corridor improvements. Because RTID could be delayed until a May or Nov. 04 vote, we have to reserve funds into the future. Final action from the State Legislature is still up in the air.

Stone explained that a special AEMRA loan permits WSDOT to borrow money to begin work on I-405. WSDOT will pay back the loan at a later time. This $800,000 loan will help the project's cash flow.

Stone reviewed the Decision Process Slide and noted that today's session leads into the April 30 Executive Committee meeting. By April 30 we will have more specific information about toll revenue packages. He noted that we are trying to tie the I-405 project into the RTID decision process. RTID hopes to have a draft ready for public outreach by their May 8 meeting and needs to include specifics about the I-405 project.

Texas Tale
At the last Executive Session Ed Reagan from Wilbur Smith presented information about the California managed lane experience. The Executive Committee asked WSDOT to provide additional information about the Texas experience, which Stone presented at today's Steering Committee.

There are two facilities that are or will use managed lane concepts (The Katy freeway, Houston IH-10, and the LBJ Freeway). Houston has gone to an aggressive bus rapid system using the "Texas T". Stone noted that the planned IH-10 facility uses electronic tolling, variable pricing, and a very similar configuration to what is being considered in Seattle.

Brian Sullivan asked if there is a specific speed commitment? Ann Martin noted the commitment is to maintain free flow conditions on the Texas facility.

Texas initially created a reversible HOV lane, and they are now planning a two lane managed lane/4 GP lane configuration in each direction in its place.

In reference to Texas' decision to exclude trucks, Pete Beoliuou asked how they defined trucks (WSDOT will answer this question later).

Stone demonstrated how registration of cars in the managed lane system works, including how HOV vehicles are excluded from paying tolls through the use of a special pull out lane, with enforcement areas built next to the toll readers.

Texas proposes to use five separate tolling time periods in the eastbound and five in the westbound directions.

A similar program is proposed for Dallas, where managed lanes are proposed for a portion of the beltway around the city. The system will be built in three phases.

[Note that the "Through Trip Toll Rates" slide was missing from the IH-10 handout—and so the entire presentation will be e-mailed to the steering committee.]

HOV Performance

Stone turned the presentation over to Don Samdahl to review HOV performance along I-405. He reviewed the 1 plus 4 versus 2 plus 3 configurations described at an earlier meeting. Looking ahead, Don noted that we will review more detail about pricing of managed lanes at the May and June meetings.

Don explained that HOV vehicles traveling at less than the 45 mph threshold do not meet state standards. As time passes, beginning in several years, the I-405 corridor begins to "breakdown" along segments of the roadway. By 2020 the entire corridor no longer is operating at HOV performance thresholds (which he demonstrated in a series of powerpoint slides).

If we were to convert the existing HOV2 lane to HOV3, the lane would be underutilized for years and years. At best we would only be using _ the capacity of the lane, and HOV2 vehicles would need to move into the GP lanes. As a result, the HOV3 approach does not make best use of our facility.

Don explained how the HOV/managed lanes alternative would work through time. Using a graphic describing the theory of managed lane utilization, he explained how the lane fills up with transit, HOV3 (toll free), HOV2 (toll free), and finally SOV travelers. Samdahl explained how, if and when we could sell off excess capacity from managed lanes.

Along I-405, Don noted that we will quickly run out of capacity to sell off remaining capacity under a single HOV/managed lane configuration, but if we considered using two managed lanes, the system could work for a much longer period.

Don explained that by the 2014-2015 time period, two managed lanes use only a portion of the capacity of these lanes, noting the specific percentage use of various segments of the corridor from 20-75% of the available capacity.

Samdahl completed his presentation noting that he would provide operating characteristics information at the next steering committee.

Pete Beoulieu asked if Samdahl believed the (managed lane) access points would work along this corridor? Don confirmed we believe it will.

Ann Martin noted that we have less capacity to sell off capacity in exactly the areas in which we have the most congestion along the GP lanes. Craig noted that the question is how best do we manage congestion chokepoints, and how well does the 2 plus 3 configuration work in increasing throughput, versus 1 HOV plus 4 GP lanes.

The group discussed how variable pricing might work as vehicles travel along the corridor, and whether the pricing would change as vehicles enter congested areas.

Craig transitioned to describing the C package improvements, beginning with the existing C1 and C2 packages presented in December (with and without managed lane configurations). Craig pointed out that the areas along I-405 leading into Bellevue are the key congested areas and he explained how the earlier C1 and C2 packages addressed this.

The later developed (and lower priced) C3 package did not warrant further discussion and was tabled (by the Executive Committee). Several new alternatives have since been developed that refine the thinking behind the C1 and C2 options, called C4 and C5.

For C4, Stone reviewed a proposed new bridge over I-90 that would build a new bridge, rerouting traffic from the existing two bridges to provide two managed lanes north and south, providing three through lanes and two managed lanes total in each direction.

Craig explained how a proposed new ramp to Main Street to and from the south would work. This ramp could be done at 2nd or Main Street, but the overall cost would go up if we put these ramps on 2nd, as the Main street bridge would have to be rebuilt regardless under this alternative.

Stone reviewed the second set of managed lane exit/entry ramps proposed to and from the north to NE 12th street. This set of ramps could be moved to 10th, but again it would cost more.

Pete Beoulieu asked if the new alternative managed lane ramps would replace the earlier proposed freeway-to-freeway connections at SR520 and I-90? Craig responded we are proposing deferment of these major rebuilds as part of the new alternatives (C4 and C5). Craig noted that these earlier proposed freeway-to-freeway ramps were becoming expensive as they relate to the HOV only ramps, which tend to be underutilized.

Craig completed the description of the new managed lane concepts noting that we can get two managed lanes through Bellevue, creating a continuous 21-mile segment of managed lanes through a heavily congested area of I-405.

Pete Beoulieu asked if there is any problem with hazardous trucks deflecting from I-90 to 405? Craig noted I-90 trucks might use the I-405 GP lanes, but didn't see a problem with this.

Craig then reviewed the cost of the C4 alternative ($4.2 – 4.5 billion). $4.2 billion is the cost estimate put together earlier. There now is a policy question of whether we stay at $4.2 billion because of past discussions, or do we develop the optimal system (which costs a little more)?

Leonard Newstrum asked if these figures include revenues from tolls? Craig replied no, this is just the expense side, adding that Hank Peters will be developing revenues to address that question.

Craig noted that a transit subcommittee (Metro KC, Sound Transit, Community Transit) has been reviewing different options associated with the I-405 alternatives. One possible change is to have Canyon Park use an outside flyer stop. A second option is to not build a freeway-to-freeway ramp at SR522 as that is a very expensive ramp. We are also looking at using existing Totem Lake interchanges rather than building new ones at 124th, and excluding the managed lane exit/entry ramps in downtown Bellevue. Finally, WSDOT is reviewing whether to defer the HOV ramp in the SW quadrant of the Renton interchange.

Jim Ardnt noted that he loved the 21-mile segment of managed lanes, but noted we also need to look at the toll revenue. Does this enhance our Sound Transit discussion? We've added some other things, e.g. Bellevue entry/exit ramps in an area that is not as congested. If the Executive Committee says keep to $4.2 billion, we should review the criteria for how we add or subtract project elements.

Ann Martin noted we should be cautious about jumping up above $4.2 billion. Pete Beoulieu noted we could phase it to get to $4.5 billion. In thinking about prioritizing or phasing, Stone noted the need to review what each element adds to the corridor performance.

Stone then reviewed C5-an alternative that excludes the various elements just reviewed above. The good news is C5 reduces the cost to $3.9 billion with a complete 21 managed lane system, but without as good access. Will it still attract enough users to work as well?

Don Samdahl noted that we will be getting revenue estimates for as far in the future as 2030. For operations we will be reviewing information to the year 2015.

Craig noted that we are thinking the general comparison we will be proposing is C1 without managed lanes with C4 with managed lanes. Stone asked the group if there are gaps to what we've proposed?

Leonard Newstrum asked about whether C5 creates unacceptable weaving problems---which the project team noted we would need to review.

On the transit side, Ann Martin noted that we appear to be deleting transit/HOV-we need a good answer to why we are doing this.

Pete Beoulieu asked why we are comparing C1 without managed lanes to C4 with managed lanes? He suggested we note C1 as the best alternative w/o managed lanes, and C4 as the best with managed lanes.

Jim Leonard asked if C4 is the first phase of the complete $10 billion project? Craig responded it is.

Craig noted that arterial work, freeway-to-freeway connections at I-90 and SR520, and transit improvements were dramatically changed in C4.

Bernard Van de Kamp—noted that we should be careful about how we handle ROW that is part of the new budget scenarios—if we delete the ROW part of the project for future work, these are costs that we will still incur later on. Will we ever come back and do that work. Is that the right policy decision? Craig noted that 1/3 of our costs are in fact ROW costs.

As the meeting came to a close, Steve Quinn noted that in thinking about options, HOV3 with managed lanes would produce the most revenue, if that were the objective. Craig described the RTID handout that shows how this project is described relative to other RTID projects. Craig noted that the I-405 project provides the most congestion relief of any RTID project by a factor of three.

The Steering Committee adjourned at about 4 p.m.