



Summary

I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Zoom

3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Executive Advisory Group members and elected officials in attendance:

- Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar, Chair
- Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold, City of Kirkland
- Commissioner Shiv Batra, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Councilmember Randy Corman, City of Renton
- Dan Mathis, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Mayor Linda Newing, City of Newcastle
- Mayor Dana Ralph, City of Kent
- Councilmember Mason Thompson, City of Bothell
- Councilmember Janice Zahn, City of Bellevue
- Rep. Davina Duerr, Washington State House of Representatives
- Rep. Kelly Chambers, Washington State House of Representatives
- Rep. Bill Ramos, Washington State House of Representatives

Staff in attendance:

- Shravan Aeneni, WSDOT
- Ed Barry, WSDOT
- Bill Baumann, Human Services Council
- Roland Behee, Community Transit (on behalf of Emmett Heath)
- Erika Boyd, Washington State House of Representatives (on behalf of Bill Ramos)
- Rob Brown, City of Kent
- Lesly Chan, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Andrea Charrier, WSDOT
- Rachelle Cunningham, Sound Transit
- Stephen Dickson, Snohomish County
- Ingrid Gaub, City of Auburn (on behalf of Mayor Nancy Backus)
- Reema Griffith, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Amy Grotefendt, WSDOT
- Katie Kuciemba Halse, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Diana Hart, City of Woodinville
- Peter Heffernan, King County Metro
- Heather Hernandez, WSDOT
- Tamara Jones, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Ron Judd, WSDOT
- Satwinder Kaur, City of Kent
- Karen Kitsis, Sound Transit
- Eric Knigge, WSDOT
- Cyndy Knighton, City of Tukwila
- Tam Kutzmark, City of Redmond
- Luke Lamon, Sound Transit
- Tanya Lavoy, Washington State Senate (on behalf of Patty Kuderer)
- Erin Leonhart, City of Bothell
- Doug Levy, City of Renton
- Mary Beth Lowell, Community Transit
- Mary MacKie, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Robin Mayhew, WSDOT
- Ann McNeil, Sound Transit
- Kelly McGourty, Puget Sound Regional Council
- Megan McPhaden, Transportation Committee, Washington State House of Representatives
- Jeremy Metzler, City of Edgewood



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- ☑ Victoria Miller, I-405/SR 167 Program
- ☑ Martin Pastucha, City of Renton
- ☑ Le Nguyen, WSDOT
- ☑ Joel Pfundt, City of Kirkland
- ☑ Kimberly Pincheira, WSDOT
- ☑ Jacqueline Ramirez, I-405/SR 167 Program
- ☑ Andrew Singelakis, City of Bellevue
- ☑ Craig Smiley, I-405/SR 167 Program
- ☑ Alex Soldano, Sound Transit
- ☑ Kelly Snyder, Snohomish County
- ☑ Ariel Taylor, Sound Transit
- ☑ Blake Trask, King County
- ☑ Bernard van de Kamp, Sound Transit
- ☑ Karl Westby, I-405/SR 167 Program
- ☑ Lacey Jane Wolfe, City of Bellevue

Presenters:

- ☑ Don Billen, Executive Director Planning, Environment & Project Development, Sound Transit
- ☑ Kimberly Farley, Chief System Officer, Sound Transit
- ☑ Lisa Hodgson, Deputy Program Administrator, I-405/SR 167 Program, WSDOT
- ☑ Julie Meredith, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Megaprograms, WSDOT
- ☑ Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar, Chair
- ☑ Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary, Office of Urban Mobility and Access, WSDOT

Note: These meeting notes are intended to capture the discussion at the meeting, including questions and comments from the group. This is not intended to be a formal testimony or a complete transcript of the meeting. Meeting materials including the PowerPoint presentation are available on the web at:

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/Tolling/EastsideCorridor/EAG2013.htm>

I. Introductions and Agenda Review

Roger Millar, Secretary of Transportation, welcomed the Interstate 405/State Route 167 Executive Advisory Group members and acknowledged the impact of COVID-19 on the format of the meeting. He then introduced Julie Meredith, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Megaprograms, who provided an overview of her position at WSDOT. Julie shared information about Kim Henry's retirement and outlined the next steps in filling the Program Administrator role.

II. Public comment

There were no public comments.

III. WSDOT update

Secretary Millar provided an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on WSDOT. He said that the agency is working to understand all of the implications, including to the budget and the ability to deliver projects. I-976 had already impacted the budget, and then COVID-19 hit Washington State. He said that the Governor took appropriate action by implementing the Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order, however, there have been difficult impacts to the economy. He explained that gas tax and toll revenue are down, as well as ridership on ferries, transit, and Amtrak Cascades. He also talked about the impacts of requiring construction to pause. He reviewed the transportation



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revenue impacts, which is a loss of \$1.3 billion over three years. This includes a \$483 million transportation revenue deficit to address in the current 2019-2021 biennium and \$859 million to address in the 2021-2023 biennium. He explained that WSDOT is required to provide a 15 percent reduction to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) in the budget submittal.

Discussion:

- Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn said that she appreciates WSDOT advocating for funding at the federal level. She commented that the market is currently good for construction, so it would be beneficial to receive these funds. Secretary Millar said that the state asked for \$50 million, and the bill is now with the Senate. He said that WSDOT is primarily focused on revenue relief to backfill and deliver the current program first, however, they are also interested in stimulus money for new projects that do not have funding.
- Representative Davina Duerr asked whether there is a possibility of getting funding for the accumulation of maintenance work. Secretary Millar said that WSDOT spends less than \$690 million per year on maintenance, but that there is a need for \$1.2 billion per year for maintenance. He said that preservation work employs more people compared to construction. It will ultimately be the Governor's and Legislature's decision on how to spend the money, however, he will advocate to put it toward preservation work. Rep. Duerr asked if there is advocacy on pursuing funding for preservation and Secretary Millar answered that there is.

Next, Assistant Secretary at WSDOT's Office of Urban Mobility and Access, Patty Rubstello, provided an update on traffic and toll impacts as a result of COVID-19. She explained that traffic volumes are down statewide and tolling is down by 80 percent. The I-405 Express Toll Lanes saw an 87 percent drop in late March, with traffic starting to return now in late June. The SR 167 High Occupancy Toll lanes were more volatile—there was a significant drop in early April, however, traffic is starting to return faster than on I-405. She reviewed the impact on toll revenue noting there is not a lot of data on how COVID-19 has effected this, showing that it was down \$7.6 million for the period from March to May 2020 (post-COVID-19). The June forecast showed a significant drop in toll revenue—\$25.6 million for the current biennium and \$145.6 million over the next decade. The next update to the forecast will be in November 2020. She explained that bonding has not started yet and that WSDOT has begun the process of an investment grade traffic and revenue study.

Discussion:

- Rep. Duerr asked whether the 10-year projected deficit is based on COVID-19 impacts, or whether it factors in potential changes in more people working from home. Rubstello explained that it is based on a combination of these factors.
- Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn said that the City of Bellevue is running similar forecasts, and asked about the assumptions made in the forecast scenario. She said that it would be helpful to have the same baseline. A [link](#) to the transportation revenue forecast was shared with the group. Councilmember Zahn noted that it would also be helpful to understand how long people will telework.
- Ingrid Gaub from the City of Auburn said that it is important for the south end of the corridor that the SR 167 Master Plan moves forward.
- Kent Mayor Dana Ralph said that SR 167 is one of the roadways where traffic has not decreased. She agreed that it is important for the SR 167 Master Plan to move forward. She said that a majority of citizens in the area are essential workers, and are not able to telework. Rubstello noted similar trends in other parts of the country.

IV. Sound Transit update

Kimberly Farley, Sound Transit's Chief System Officer and Don Billen, Sound Transit's Executive Director of Planning, Environment & Project Development, provided an update on Sound Transit's response to COVID-19, the agency's path forward, and implications for I-405 BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) projects.

Kimberly reviewed changes to operations due to COVID-19. She explained that drops in ridership have impacted revenue. Fares were suspended and service was reduced during this time. Fares resumed on July 1 and service is increasing. She then reviewed changes to construction, noting that 80 percent of construction activities were suspended in early April. Sound Transit has worked with their contractors to develop safety plans and are now nearly back to pre-COVID-19 levels of construction. Next, she explained that Sound Transit is heavily reliant on local revenue sources, including sales tax, and has therefore been impacted by the economic downturn. They are currently looking at their debt capacity and trying to understand what the recession and recovery might look like. She noted that there is limited tax collection data, and it is difficult to predict what the duration and depth of the recession will be.

Farley then introduced Don Billen. He started by explaining that Sound Transit's near-term priority is to keep construction going safely. He noted that they are working with WSDOT on the I-405, Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project. They are continuing to work on the current phases that their projects are in but need to wait on advancing any projects until further financial information and data can be seen by the Sound Transit Board of Directors. This is part of the Sound Transit Board's Realignment Process. For I-405 BRT, they are continuing their environmental review, which is part of the current phase of the project. Work is continuing on the I-405, NE 85th Street Interchange and Inline Station Project through the environmental phase, but they will wait to move the project to the construction phase. Billen explained that Sound Transit is not planning to authorize new contracts until the Board works through their process. The goal is to maintain shovel readiness for when the construction phase is approved. He then reviewed the options to manage affordability, which include delaying project completion, modifying project scopes, pursuing additional grant funding, or finding new revenue sources. He said that there is a lot of uncertainty with these options. Next, he said that Sound Transit will provide a program status briefing to the Sound Transit Board in Q3/Q4 2020. They will look to adopt a budget in Q4, with a comprehensive program realignment by July 2021. He reviewed the process to develop a comprehensive realignment. One option would be to delay all projects by five years, however, he said this may not be the best approach. He then introduced the framework that the Board developed last week. He went through each of the criterion and concepts, which include ridership potential, socio-economic equity, and connecting centers. Billen explained that the next steps would include technical work for scenario development, which will then be presented to the Board. Next, Billen reminded the EAG members about the I-405 BRT project, and how it integrates the local and regional transit systems. He showed the travel time improvements and the pre-COVID-19 schedule for the I-405 BRT project, noting that a number of factors are affecting the schedule.

Discussion:

- Renton Councilmember Randy Corman thanked Sound Transit for providing an update and said that Renton is looking forward to BRT. He noted that Renton has been working with WSDOT on the I-405, Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project, which is closely coupled with BRT. He said that he is concerned with the delays but understands the challenges the agencies are facing. He appreciates the work being done to resolve those delays and wants to keep the momentum for the projects going. Billen thanked Councilmember Corman for the support from the City of Renton.
- Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold asked whether there are conversations happening between WSDOT and Sound Transit regarding project schedules. Billen said that there are regular conversations between the agencies. Farley added that they will be continuing conversations with the Board. The next step will



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be to provide an in-depth snapshot of the context of each project. This will include an overview of the work that has been done with partners as well as cost efficiencies of continuing to move forward.

- Deputy Mayor Arnold asked whether bond authority is set in legislation and if Sound Transit could talk more about how the bonding of projects is considered as they are looking at the debt ceiling. Billen said that local governments in the state constitution have a debt cap of .2 percent, unless they go to the voters and request to raise it. Therefore, without legislation and a constitutional amendment, Sound Transit could choose to put a ballot measure forward, which would allow the ceiling to go up to 4 or 5 percent.
- Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn commented that the BRT is an important piece of the I-405, Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project. She noted that I-405 traffic has not come back as strongly as SR 167 traffic, however, it is starting to get congested. Additionally, people may not be comfortable riding transit. She would like to keep BRT moving forward. She asked whether the south and north ends of BRT could be completed separately, and said that the design for Bellevue's downtown hub will be crucial. Billen said that there are two sections of the BRT system, one from Burien to Bellevue and one from Lynnwood to Bellevue. The current projection is that service in the south end will start in 2024 but that north end service will wait until 2025, so that it can take advantage of the new direct access ramps at SR 522 and Canyon Park in Bothell. Councilmember Zahn asked whether the north end may be delayed even further out. Billen said that this is a possibility.

V. I-405/SR 167 Corridor update

I-405/SR 167 Deputy Program Administrator, Lisa Hodgson gave a background of the program, the status of the program before COVID-19, and an update on several projects. She started with an overview of the I-405 Master Plan and discussed how the EAG has been instrumental in moving the program forward. She discussed how the program has focused on the BRT and Express Toll Lane (ETL) systems since the passage of ESSB 5825. She showed the program funding sources, which include Connecting Washington, Sound Transit, and toll revenue.

Next, she gave an update on several I-405/SR 167 projects. She noted that WSDOT is releasing the Environmental Assessment for the SR 522 Vicinity to SR 527 Express Toll Lane (ETL) Improvement Project in July. An online public meeting was coordinated with FHWA. Construction is anticipated to start in 2022. She discussed the I-405, NE 85th Street Interchange and Inline Station Project, which is funded by Sound Transit, and is in the preliminary engineering and environmental phases. Environmental documentation is expected in the near future. The I-405, NE 132nd Street Interchange Project is currently in the preliminary engineering and right of way stages. It has received environmental documentation and the program is looking at putting out a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Next, she gave an update on the Northbound SR 167 ETL extension. This is a design bid build project scheduled to go out to ad near the end of this year in December. It is funded by PSRC grant money. Lastly, Hodgson reviewed the Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project. She said that the final design work continued as WSDOT transitioned to teleworking as well as construction on fish passage work. The project is now moving into more significant construction with work happening on the King County Eastrail and upcoming work at the Northeast 44th Street interchange. She then showed the new concept for the I-405/Northeast 44th Street interchange, which was proposed by the design-builder, Flatiron-Lane Joint Venture. She explained how the construction plan for the new concept would allow a lot of the work to be done offline, reducing required closures by 40 to 50 percent. Hodgson ended her comments by reminding the EAG that this dialogue will continue and that another EAG meeting will be scheduled in fall 2020.

Discussion:



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- Renton Councilmember Randy Corman thanked WSDOT for working with the City of Renton staff on the Northeast 44th Street interchange. He believes that the new concept has many benefits. Hodgson said that the City has been great to work with.
- Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn said that she is excited about the new concept for the Northeast 44th Street interchange. She asked whether work at Exit 9 is still part of the project. Hodgson said that it is still included in the scope of work; the presentation focused on the Northeast 44th Street interchange because that is where upcoming construction will be. Councilmember Zahn asked that the City be updated on the design as it advances. She then asked whether the Wilburton trestle project is moving forward. Hodgson said that she would have King County Parks get back with an answer on the status of that project.
- Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold asked whether the Northeast 85th and Northeast 132nd projects are moving forward to be shovel ready. Hodgson said that work on these projects is continuing at this point. The Northeast 132nd project is funded through Connecting Washington and the Northeast 85th project is funded by Sound Transit, so conversations will need to be had in terms of schedule.