Point Defiance Bypass Project Technical Advisory Team – Meeting Notes

Date: **July 29, 2010**
Attendees: Jeff Gonzalez, City of Lakewood
Minh Vo, Camp Murray
Peter Zahn, City of DuPont
Jesse Hamashima, Pierce County
Jodi Mitchell, Sound Transit
WSDOT Project Team: Melanie Coon, Chris Dunster, Kevin Jeffers, Larry Mattson

Welcome
Public Works Director Peter Zahn kicked off the meeting by asking guests to introduce themselves.

Project Overview - Past, present and future
Environmental Manager Larry Mattson overviewed the work done last week.
Current work:

- Larry introduced the team charge and asked for comments.
- Team Charge: Access the team charge at the Advisory Team Web site.
  - Peter Zahn-would like to include alternative alignments into the charge, specifically to add "route alternatives".
- Mattson alerted the group that the purpose and need statement is still under review at WSDOT and will be distributed in the near future.

Environmental Assessment:

- Explanation of NEPA Principles
  - WSDOT has a candid straightforward process: "get the conflict out on the table"
  - Explanation of interdisciplinary teams – team formats for generating more input
  - Review of feedback from kick off meeting participants
  - Creating a balance between the needs and the impacts

- Reports and resources during the process
  - We'll look back at studies done during the first EA
  - Also leverage new information that has been published since that time.

- Public Outreach - Melanie Coon covered the public outreach strategies. Briefings, public events, open houses.

- Balancing effects – Larry commented that the most challenging, but most rewarding is looking at social, environmental and economic effects. Challenges are the technical constraints, political process, and economic impacts.

- Schedule – **Mattson promised a Gantt chart within the next 30 days.**
  - Transportation report in February 2011
  - Socio-economic report in March 2011
  - Noise and vibration report in April 2011

Jeff Gonzalez presentation about the Lakewood Pedestrian Bridge

Lakewood has a grant to do a pedestrian bridge near the Lakewood station HUB area. The bridge connects up with Lakewood's town center and central business district. The purpose of the project is to create accessibility to Sounder station and improved access.

- The Lakewood project team is in the process of preliminary design work.
    - Street improvement design is being done in house.
    - KPFF is doing the design for the pedestrian bridge. KPFF did the design for the Lakewood station. Design will be complete by June 2011.
    - Lakewood recently applied for enhancement money to pay for construction. No results yet. The grant application also includes some street improvements up to 11 St SW. Curb gutter sidewalks, planter strips.
    - Looking at potential property takes as part of the project. The design process will narrow that down.
- Sound Transit's Jodi Mitchell asked with whom at Sound Transit he is coordinating? Gonzalez said it is Val Beatty.
- Handouts from Jeff's presentation are available on the Advisory Team Web site.

Design Options

- Mattson stated that at past meetings we had asked for feedback on design options.
    - WSDOT wants feedback on mitigation measures as well.
    - Design options are integral features of a project's proposed improvements (e.g., wayside horns, median barriers); mitigation measures reduce or eliminate negative effects of a project (e.g., noise walls, public information campaigns).
    - What are some of the things that would minimize or eliminate impacts to specific jurisdictions?
- Mattson asked for any other items for the mitigation list.
    - Zahn asked that noise and vibration be added. He commented that when looking at grade separations look at paralleling I-5, and consider constraints. Barksdale crossing. Example: at Barksdale; does that change other options being looked in other studies? Mattson said this group will be talking a lot more about that in the future when the discipline reports start coming in.

- A question was asked whether double tracking at the second crossing was part of Point Defiance.
    - Jeffers responded that yes, we completed double tracking from 66th down to Bridgeport. It was covered in the DCE because it was being done with State funds.

- Jesse Hamashima asked if speeds are negotiable. Melanie Coon clarified that the funding is tied to the service outcomes.
    - Zahn inquired about the video that WSDOT produced demonstrating the 79 mph speeds.
    - Jeffers clarified that the video is showing the speeds at a crossing in Puyallup.
    - **Coon agreed to place the way side horn and Puyallup crossing videos on WSDOT's streaming server for access to the team**
    - The videos are here: \\wsdot\resources\Topics\Publish\FTP\Data\incoming\Point Defiance Bypass

- Zahn asked about the emergency response protocol. Jeffers said that the freight operators have an emergency response plan. We will be looking at derailments and the effect on non rail emergencies and how signalization may impact emergency response.
- Gonzalez asked how the design options were put together. Jeffers said Best Practices and looking at other corridors.
    - Not specific to just passenger rail.
    - Focuses on areas in Washington that are busy rail traffic areas. Signalization strategy is to implement existing technology.
    - What is being proposed is in effect "Best Practice". **Jeffers offered to compile a list of the proposed at-grade safety options.**

- Zahn recalled a council meeting where a council member cited studies that the project team could not substantiate. Zahn recommended that we have good data available for back up.
    - He mentioned that there was an incident on the tracks within the last five years which triggered refinements to the response plan.
    - Coon stated that we have asked for the incident data from UTC and will use when appropriate.

- Minh Vo commented about Camp Murray's gate relocation.
    - 95% design documents are ready to be submitted. They are hoping to get bid authority in Sept. to pursue federal funding. It's under review by Pierce County.
    - Timing is dependent on city of Lakewood giving them a right of way permit.
    - Local community meeting on Aug 10 and 11. Tillicum and Eagle Point.
    - **Vo will bring some more detailed info to the next technical committee meeting.**
    - Mattson commented that these two projects are examples of potential partnerships in doing mitigation (the Camp Murray gate relocation and the Lakewood pedestrian bridge).

Questions on NEPA?

Will there be a "draft" and then a "final" EA, like a draft and final EIS? Mattson responded that there is no draft EA. Of the three types of NEPA documentation, an EA represents the middle-of-the-road approach. The categorical exclusion requires fewer documents. However, the Environmental Assessment gives us more opportunities to customize public involvement. There is no published draft or final document like during the EIS process, but the technical team will review the discipline reports of note as the EA is being compiled. We will make provisions to make sure there are plenty of public input opportunities.

Are there concerns about the shelf life of your data?
Mattson responded saying FRA guidance on data shelf life is three years. The project team is preparing an inventory of the previous discipline reports for the FRA and will share that inventory with the technical team when it is finished. The inventory will include information on the freshness of the data and why or why not the data should be updated. Peter Zahn added that traffic data updates are ongoing. His assessment of the 2009 numbers is that they are looking more like 2006, even though we know there were surges in between. He expects those numbers to increase with the expansion of the JBLM. Jeffers added that we will do new counts starting in September 2010. Zahn asked for clarification

about WSDOT's cameras gathering data along the corridor. Jeffers confirmed that the videos will be used for queue verification as part of the modeling which WSDOT hired HDR to do.

Next steps:

Last Call for design options and mitigation measures: Mattson repeated his request suggesting mitigation measures and design option suggestions get sent to Melanie Coon **before August 5**. The WSDOT team will send out the list for review by the committee before the August 12 weighting meeting.

NOTE: The next Technical Committee meeting is **Thursday, August 12 from 9 to 11 a.m.** Please note the time change. The meeting will be at the Pierce Transit's Rainier Conference room at 3720 96th Street SW in South Tacoma.