

**MINUTES OF THE LOCAL MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
April 20, 2010**

The local jurisdiction meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9 a.m., on Tuesday, April 20, 2010 at the Best Western Inn at Horse Heaven, 259 Merlot Drive, Prosser, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Carol Moser, Bob Distler, Dick Ford, Elmira Forner, Dan O'Neal, Latisha Hill and Philip Parker.

CHAIRMAN WELCOME AND COMMISSION INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Moser called the meeting to order and introduced Commission staff.

Commissioners introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds and perspectives

**TRANSPORTATION 101 – A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FUNDING AND PLANNING
IN WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION**

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, Transportation Commission, provided a presentation on the distribution of transportation revenues.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP02_Transp101Final0410.pdf

CITY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Mayor Paul Warden, City of Prosser, talked about the demographics of the city of 5,000 and a service area population of 17,000.

He shared that the city's street budget is about \$125,000 per year, and there is a one-time street maintenance need of about \$13 million. The city has developed infrastructure in recent years such as Vintner's Village development of shops and services that was accomplished through innovative partnerships with the Port of Benton. These types of partnerships can leverage small amounts of money into big things.

The city adopted a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) in early 2009 using its Councilmanic authority to collect \$20 per licensed vehicle within the city. The current street budget is \$120,000 per year, but the need is about \$300,000 a year for maintenance. The TBD provides important augmentation and the revenues are dedicated to roads and sidewalks. The Six-year transportation plan shows how the TBD revenue will be used.

The city also advocated for an interchange improvement at I-82 and Gap Road and slower traffic on SR 22 on the southern outskirts. The City has developed a bike-pedestrian plan to add sidewalks and improve bike safety, which has not been adopted by the city yet.

Action/Follow-up items: None

COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Commissioner Leo Bowman, Benton County, shared that new projects are focused on improvements to allow products to move all-year round.

The four main projects are:

- Hanks Road
- Travis Road (part of Webber Canyon)
- Clodfelter/Locust Grove
- Piert Road

Total cost for these projects is about \$25 million.

Malcolm Bowie, Benton County Engineer shared that the maximum weight for an “all-weather road” is at the legal limit. The construction cost is about \$500,000 per mile. Finding the money to improve a road to meet “all-weather roads” standards often raises the question, “How do you get a relatively low-cost project with large economic impact on the radar?”

The Roza Safety Study completed Fall 2009; shows simple safety solutions at low cost. Some examples:

- Oversized stop signs
- Intersection warning and stop ahead signs
- Stop bar and “Stop Ahead” pavement markings
- No-pass pavement markings; and
- Rumble strips
- Benton County estimates only \$7,000 to implement.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP04_BentonCoTranrsp.pdf

Action/Follow-up items: Check back next fall to see how Benton County safety improvements have worked.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Mark Kushner, Transportation Director, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG) and key partners on the panel shared local perspectives.

Mr. Kushner shared that the BFCOG is an MPO/RTPO. He noted that growth in urban areas is about two percent a year for the last decade. Franklin County is the 18th fastest growing county in the United States.

Port of Benton

Main focus is economic development. The Port partners with Prosser, Benton City and Richland. Its Vintner's Village Phase I in Prosser is a 32-acre development; \$30 million private investment. Phase II anticipates another \$15 million in private investment.

Ben Franklin Transit

Has 310 vans and is the third largest vanpool program in the state. Premium fares are charged for some services. Over 40 percent of system's bus riders do not have cars.

The total fleet is 61 buses. Fifty buses and 45 Dial-a Ride vans pull out in the morning. Twenty five of the buses are 18 years old or older.

Pasco

The City of Pasco's demographics is very different from Richland. The school district tax base is about half of Richland.

City needs to replace Lewis Street railroad yard underpass built in 1937, but lacks city resources to do so. Also seeks a solution to ball field traffic heading back to Benton County on I-182. A proposed "A Street" interchange will improve access to the Port of Pasco and industrial area growth.

Richland

Mayor John Fox, City of Richland, shared that the annual transportation budget is about \$3.1 million; one-third comes from the fuel tax.

He also talked about the need for the Duportail Bridge to link the downtown with the Queensgate commercial area. The bridge fits all six state transportation policy goals. Total cost is \$32.5 million. The city does not know how to raise the money. Richland has not established a TBD or other local option revenue source, except for increasing utility tax.

Benton City

Mayor Lloyd Carnahan, City of Benton, talked about the need for the roundabout proposed for 224/225/I-82 connection. Sales tax revenue has actually increased due to new development.

West Richland

Mayor Donna Noski, City of West Richland, discussed the Red Mountain interchange (Phase II). SR 224 runs directly through the City.

Different jurisdictions prefer competitive grants vs. per capita formula grants for various reasons. Generally, smaller cities tend to prefer per capita grants.

Port of Kennewick

Skip Novakovich, Vice President, Port of Kennewick, talked about developments in West Richland (Keene Road) and Kennewick. The Port is heavily involved in assisting the wine industry. Vista Field in Kennewick will remain open; the Port is poised to expand air service.

Kennewick

Ken Nelson, Assistant Public Works Director, City of Kennewick, talked about the Steptoe extension, a version of the Ring Road first discussed 50 years ago. Phase I will begin construction this summer.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP05_RegTranspChallengesSuccesses.pdf

Action/Follow-up items: None

RTPO PRIORITIZED PROJECTS

Mark Kushner, Transportation Director, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments, talked about the budget proviso directing the Commission to collect county, city, and regional transportation project priorities from RTPOs. BFCOG doesn't have a single prioritized regional project list, but there are many lists.

- The local Good Roads Association has developed a prioritized regional list that includes state and local projects.
- The federal stimulus project list is state only.
- The STIP is a six-year priority project list by jurisdiction.
- Federal Surface Transportation Program list also is prioritized.

Mr. Kushner spoke to how the ranking criteria for the regional transportation needs address the six policy goals?

The Regional Transportation Plan looks at need/money over 20 years. But, there is no prioritized list of projects. Mr. Kushner identified top RTPO Projects *for illustrative purposes* and compared them to the legislative policy goals. The Commission considers the list to be a great start.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP06_RTPOPrioritizedProjects.pdf

Action/Follow-up items: Commission needs to clarify what it is asking for in compiling its legislatively directed regional project lists so that regions know we need to also get information on current funding needs for projects, the funding shortfall, partners in proposing and funding the project, and regional impacts of the project.

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT) REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Troy Suing, Assistant Director, South Central Region, WSDOT, shared that WSDOT supports the Red Mountain project and will be lead engineer.

Other major projects in the region include:

- A Street in Pasco
- Road 100/I-82 in Pasco
- Blue Bridge/SR 240 interchange
- US 12 in Walla Walla.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP07_SCRProjectOverview.pdf

Action/Follow-up items: None

TRAVEL, TOURISM AND VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE

Deb Heintz, Executive Director, Prosser Economic Development Association, shared that Con-Agra is closing most of its facility in downtown Prosser. The current worker retraining is focused on back-to-school.

Farm-to-market transportation improvements go hand-in-hand with safety improvements. The Roza area has highest fatality rate in the State. All the traffic from the Roza must access the freeway through Exit 80. Prosser EDA seeks new interchange at mile 81.

She pointed out the value of farm-to-market produce noting that one truckload of apples equals \$125,000 and one truckload of hops equals \$100,000.

The agricultural industry is strong, but the resources Hanford brings remain critical to Benton County. The Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center will be a regional destination/attraction. Its Outdoor Center will be open in August/September 2010. WSU is a partner in the center, which conservatively estimates will attract 40 thousand visitors a year and will feature all state AVAs; brand neutral.

Please click on the links to view the presentations:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP08_Heintz.pdf

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP08_WalterCloreWineCulinary.pdf

Mike Hogue, Hogue Cellars, shared that he started business in 1982. In its first year, visitors at Prosser's Spring Fling wine festival increased from 300 to 3000. He emphasized that there is a need for better signage to wineries and related agricultural centers and attractions that make them more visible to the traveling public.

Action/Follow-up items: Sort out what can be done with signage on state highways, legally and practically.

IN STREET CITIES

Deb Woodbury, Manager, Historic Downtown Prosser, talked about how the historic downtown effort contributes to existing tourism. The focus is how to draw tourist's downtown. The organization's wish list includes passenger train service to Prosser and ways for wine and agri-tourists to get around.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP09_HDPA_WSDO_T_Presentation.pdf

Action/Follow-up items: None

COLUMBIA RIVER LOCKS CLOSURE: PREPARATION AND RESPONSE

Mike Rowsell, Transportation Planning Specialist, Freight Systems division, State Rail Office, WSDOT, facilitated discussion of how farmers, grain shippers and others are preparing for a 14-week closure of the Columbia River inland waterway. The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) puts most of its effort into the Columbia-Snake River System. Waterways are a mode of transportation that is not perhaps being fully utilized or recognized. Within the Columbia and Snake Rivers is a 14' barge channel extending 360 miles from Portland to Lewiston/Clarkston. This contributes to the Pacific Northwest as the 3rd largest grain gateway in the world.

Three major shovel-ready projects (about \$50 million) will be upgraded during the 14-week closure: locks at The Dalles, John Day, and Lower Monumental Dams. Corps and PNWA have publicized the closures and provide on-going outreach. Short-term modal shifts are expected. Growers are considering logistic alternatives. Petroleum products will need to find other routes. The timing for Corps' work is due to fish window.

Please click on the links to view the presentations:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP10_ColumbiaRiverClosureStudy.pdf

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP10_KMeira_PNWA.pdf

Mark Blazer and Ted Kadau, WATCO, operate the PCC and the Great NW RRs. WATCO moved 2225 grain shuttle cars in 08-09 and expecting about 3200 this harvest year. PCC and GRNW remove over 51,000 trucks from roads annually. Class 1 RRs have been very active and helpful; very flexible on service and pricing. Beyond the river closure, WATCO is looking at possible intermodal service from GRNW/Lewiston.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP10_WATCO_Presentation.pdf

Dave Gordon, Manager, Northwest Grain Growers Association, praised PNWA for its work in securing money and coordinating the closure. NGGA ships about 10% of soft

white wheat shipped from NW. Japan, Philippines, South Korea and Yemen are major purchasers. Between 90-95% is exported. The ultimate goal is to keep the freight rates as low as possible to benefit the farmers the most.

The Washington-Idaho Railroad plans to take more grain from Palouse to Spokane. WSU is studying the closure and its impacts.

Please click on the link to view the presentation:

http://wstc.wa.gov/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2010/April20/20100420_BP10_Gordon.pdf

Action/Follow-up items: None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul W. Locke, citizen, shared that he feels labor costs are too high because of union rules.

This meeting has been recorded. If you would like additional meeting details, tapes are available for a nominal fee. Please contact the Transportation Commission Office at (360)705-7070.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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ATTEST:

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