

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Local Meeting Summary

Kelso WA

April 21, 2015

Chairman Haley opened the meeting and asked Commissioners to introduce themselves.

Commissioner Tortorelli moved adoption of the March 17 & 18, 2015 meeting summary. Commissioner Jennings seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

Mayor David Futcher welcomed the Commission to Kelso, Longview and Cowlitz County.

TRANSPORTATION 101 - A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION IN WASHINGTON

Paul Parker, Deputy Director, WSTC, provided a brief transportation overview.

[Transportation 101](#)

CITY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Steve Taylor, City Manager of Kelso, told the Commission that Kelso has used every funding source available for transportation, including a TBD. He also emphasized the need for the state to adequately fund grant programs. Mike Kardas, Public Works Director for the City of Kelso praised TIB's Hardship Assistance Program, which helps finance improvements to former state highways turned back to cities.

Mr. Kardas also talked about a realignment of West Main to Allen Street that has been completed. Another key project is improving 850 feet of West Main Street and making it more pedestrian friendly: new sidewalks and enhanced crosswalks, new pavement, pedestrian scale lighting, and water quality facilities for treating stormwater. Project cost is estimated at \$1,025,000. Funding is secured and comes from:

- Kelso CDBG Program Income (NICER)
- Kelso Transportation Benefit District
- Federal Surface Transportation Program
- County Rural Public Facilities Grants

The next phase would extend to Ocean Beach Highway and is estimated to cost \$6 - \$7 million.

Other important projects include:

- A South Kelso railroad grade separation, estimated to cost \$25 million; and
- Talley Way industrial area improvements, including a bridge replacement.

The City of Longview has about 138 centerline miles of roadway, serving its 35,000 population. Manuel Abarca, Longview Public Works Director, said that 70 percent of roads are local and more than half are concrete. The city founders built the system to last. Pavement analysis indicates the city is spending today only 20% of what a comparable city would be spending.

Longview's Priorities:

- Pedestrian Safety

- School Zone Safety
- Technology
- Seeking Funding for Pavement Maintenance

Longview is very serious about school zone safety. Longview has invested \$8.4 Million on pedestrian safety projects in the last 5 years. The city is committed to making its school zones the safest they can be. Longview hired national experts on School Zone Safety to conduct a safety audit. It recommends about \$900,000 in improvements.

Longview also is investing in technology to help improve efficiency. Technology is appealing because it provides really big returns on the investments while minimizing the construction impacts to public.

A major challenge is how to bring traffic signals from the 1980's into the 21st Century? We have limited options with our traffic signals because our control equipment is over 30 years old. The local transit provider would like to explore transit signal priority to improve route reliability.

Longview wants to partner with WSDOT and the City of Kelso to coordinate the major routes through our jurisdictions. The first phase, to coordinate SR 4 from West City Limits to Kelso City Limits, begins next year.

Successes include:

- Downtown Streetscape
- Tennant Way Low Impact Development Streetscape, which will provide a welcoming gateway into the city from Interstate 5
- Washington Way Bridge Replacement

[City of Kelso](#)

[City of Longview](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

SR 432/433: ROAD, RAIL, RIVER

Cowlitz County, the City of Longview and the Port of Longview all indicated the importance of a grade separation and rail realignment along SR 432 to relieve congestion, enhance safety, and improve freight mobility. A new alignment also will help to open up over 2000 acres of developed and developable industrial land west of the SR 432/433 interchange, generate 1000 construction jobs and facilitate creation of 3,390 permanent jobs. Don Jensen, Mayor of the City of Longview, reported that SR 432/433 has the highest number of reported crashes in the SR 432/433/Tennant Way Corridor.

Ashley Helenberg, Director of External Affairs, Port of Longview, emphasized that SR 432/433 is not just a corridor, but a link in a statewide transportation system. Systemwide improvements began with the Columbia River channel deepening, lock rehabilitation and jetty improvements. The SR 432/433 interchange is the fifth ranking truck tonnage interchange in the state.

Longview exports 62% of northwest timber. Washington also exports grain, calcined coke, soya meal, bentonite clay, potash, and soda ash. Imports and exports include steel, pulp and paper products, wind turbine components, and construction materials.

Commissioners asked if the private partners, such as Weyerhaeuser or Millenium, are committing money to the project? Not at this time.

Bart Gernhart, Assistant Regional Administrator, WSDOT Southwest Region, talked about WSDOT's current work on the SR 432/433 intersection. Design will be done through the NEPA process. The project is not on WSDOT's priority project list. It is in the Senate package, but not in the House package.

[SR 432 Grade Separated Intersections](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Commissioner Dennis Webber, Cowlitz County, provided a historical perspective on the transportation crossroads of Cowlitz County. The Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers were trade routes for Native Americans.

A ferry operated on the Columbia River until the first bridge crossed the Columbia in Vancouver. In 1918, the old military road was designated the Pacific Highway. The City of Longview was built to house and support the wood products industry that began in the 1920s, with Longview Fiber, Weyerhaeuser, and Simpson Lumber.

Brad Bastian, Cowlitz County Engineer, reported that Cowlitz County maintains 528 miles of roads. Maintenance is easier and less costly than repair. Spending a dollar on preservation precludes spending \$7-10 on reconstruction. About 80% of county roads are in good condition.

Of 65 bridges on Cowlitz County roads, the oldest was constructed in 1919.

- The average bridge age is 44 years old. The national average is 43 years.
- Most bridges need significant repairs or replacement by the time they reach 50 years of age. Twenty-five of the county's bridge structures are over 50 years old.
- Given an average replacement or repair cost of \$2 million, Cowlitz County would need to spend \$2.5 million per year for the next 20 years and, at that point, would have 20 more bridges over 50 years old.
- Cowlitz County currently budgets approximately \$750,000 dollars per year for bridge repairs.

The Cowlitz County road system currently includes 3,422 standard culverts.

- With a 50-year lifespan, the county should replace 70 culverts each year at an annual cost of \$350,000 (\$5,000 average replacement cost per culvert).
- In addition, 300 culverts are located on designated fish streams with 100 of those culverts identified as blockages to fish passage.
- With a 50-year life span, six fish-bearing culverts should be replaced each year at an annual cost of \$2.4 million (\$400,000 each).
- Total annual costs for culvert replacement are estimated to be nearly \$3 million, while the current budget allows for approximately \$500,000 per year.

Pete Ringen, County Engineer for Wahkiakum County, explained that culvert replacement in his county have been funded through the Salmon Recovery Board and through RAP funding from the County Road Administration Board. The Clear Creek project, a tributary of the Elochoman River, will replace a 6' culvert with a 53' long bridge and realign the roadway for safety. It will open over 2 miles of juvenile salmon habitat and improve safety on a freight and goods and school bus route. The Lower Columbia Fish

Recovery Board is providing 35% of bridge cost and design.

[Cowlitz County](#)
[Clear Creek Culvert Replacement](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Amy Asher, Transit Supervisor, RiverCities Transit, briefed the Commission on the transit system serving Kelso and Longview. It began over 85 years ago to get millworkers to and from work. The city purchased the system in the 1970s. Most riders are transit-dependent, but with a new partnership for commute trip reduction with Lower Columbia College, the ridership includes more students.

Funding is federal, local and state. The local share comes from fares, a 3/10% sales tax, advertising and the Lower Columbia College. In 2008, voters approved a sales tax increase. As a consequence, the system was rebranded as River Cities Transit. Other changes included elimination of flag stops, improved reliability to over 90% on time, expanded services and hours.

Challenges include growing pains, paratransit costs and vehicle replacements. Paratransit ridership is expected to grow as population ages.

What's next is the start of a vanpool program, developing performance standards, and increasing involvement in the community.

[RiverCities Transit](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Kim Stube, Transportation Director for the Cowlitz Tribe, reported that tribal transportation is available to all area residents at no charge. About 50% of the passengers are tribal members.

All vehicles are ADA-compliant and 90% of transports are wheelchair users. About 50% of tribal transit funding comes from its roads program. It connects with River Cities Transit, with Twin Cities Transit in Lewis County, and with Amtrak. Cowlitz Tribal Transit hopes to expand its reach into Clark County for access to medical specialists.

The rural county roads are hard on transit vehicles. There is increasing log truck traffic, leading to safety concerns.

Action/Follow-up: None.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Bill Fashing, Executive Director of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum County COG, briefed the Commission on the five county region embracing Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific and Wahkiakum Counties. Common regional issues are:

- bridge performance

- safety across modes
- bicycle/pedestrian mobility
- funding structures
- transit service
- economic vitality

Mr. Fashing reported that interest in bike/ped mobility is recent and growing, and that there is a lot of cooperation and collaboration among transit providers. A key aspect is coordinating stops, so that people can easily and safely move from one system to another.

Wahkiakum on the Move is public transit run by Wahkiakum County. It travels to Kelso and Longview.

[CWCOG SW RTPO](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

WSDOT TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Bart Gernhart, Assistant Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, WSDOT, talked about the challenges and successes in the region. With many rivers and sloughs, there are many issues with bridges and culverts, including painting and replacement.

WSDOT replaced a worn out bridge on SR 508 Newaukum River Bridge with a Bailey Bridge. A washout on SR 4, near the Naselle Youth Camp, required a temporary reroute to a 90-year old state highway. An SR 4 half bridge has bridge deck decay. Its lifespan was extended with temporary bracing, but when substantial decking had decayed, WSDOT closed and repaired the bridge half of the route.

**Painting Steel Bridges
(10 year Needs vs. 6 year Plan)**

County	# Brgs	10yr Needs \$	6yr Plan \$	# Brgs
Cowlitz	11	\$44.6M	\$0	0
Grays Harbor	11	\$45.0M	\$8.6M	4
Lewis	15	\$23.6M	NA	2
Pacific	1	\$0.2M	\$0	0
Wahkiakum	5	\$12.8M	\$7.5	1
ODOT (Astoria)	1	\$11.2M	\$11.2M	1
Totals	44	\$137.2M	\$27.3M	8

[WSDOT Transportation](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

TWO BRIDGES AND A FERRY: INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS ON THE LOWER COLUMBIA

Pete Ringen, Wahkiakum County Engineer, talked about the Wahkiakum County Ferry, which provides the only means of vehicle crossing of the Columbia River between Longview and Astoria. It was upgraded in January from a vessel that carried 12 vehicles to one that can carry 23 vehicles. It is christened the Oscar B., named after the person who ran the ferry before Wahkiakum County purchased it.

The new ferry was built by Nichols Brothers on Whidbey Island. Of the \$5.7 million project cost, the largest fund source was FHWA discretionary grant funds. CRAB, WSDOT and Wahkiakum County all contributed.

WSDOT and the Oregon DOT have an agreement to equally share the cost of maintenance and preservation for bridges that connect the states. The Lewis and Clark Bridge connecting Longview and Rainier is 1-1/2 miles long and repainting took 7 – 8 years and cost about \$40 million. Repainting has to be done section by section, with no debris falling into the river. One worker fell to his death on the project. The concrete bridge deck, built in 1929, was replaced in 80-foot sections.

The Astoria-Megler Bridge repainting began in 2009 and is scheduled to conclude in 2018. Cost is \$60 million.

[WSDOT Two Bridges in Southwest WA Wahkiakum Ferry Replacement](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

INDUSTRY AND TRADE: TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Port of Kalama

Mark Wilson, Executive Director of the Port of Kalama briefed the Commission on port property and operations. The Port of Kalama is third highest in volume in the state and owns about 1,000 acres of property. The Port of Kalama has:

- 4 deep-draft marine terminals
- Navigable waters to 43' draft ships
- 2 grain elevators, 1 steel shipper, 1 bulk chemical shipper

The state has assisted with Columbia River channel deepening, TEMCO unit train rail, BNSF third mainline and running leads, Steelscape rail and Industrial Park Bridge.

Twenty-five businesses, with over 850 jobs, are located in the port area today, including grain export, steel processing, lumber, chemicals, concrete products, compressed gases, wood protection, telecom, log home manufacturing/furnishing, bulk liquid transport, distribution, pump manufacturing, fuel dispensing, glass products, electronics recycling.

Brendan Brophy, Plant Manager for Steelscape, employs about 245 in Kalama. Steelscape receives 400,000 tons of hot rolled coil from Blue Scope in Australia and Nippon Steel in Japan. It is also provided by Blue Scope in Ohio and Nucor, Indiana.

In 2014, Steelscape Kalama:

- Received 22 shiploads of steel coil
- Received and dispatched 2595 Rail Cars
- Dispatched 7081 trucks in CY 2014.

About 40% of cold rolled steel is shipped to a sister plant in Rancho Cucamonga, California. The remainder here at Kalama is galvanized for sheeting applications such as air-conditioning ducting, steel studs, and floor decking. Some of the galvanized steel is painted on the Kalama Paint Line for use as siding, roofing, or architectural trim.

From Kalama the painted steel is trucked to sister companies and customers across the entire western United States, Alaska by barge, and into the Mid-West.

Between 9-10 million tons per year of corn, soy and wheat arrive at the port of Kalama by rail from the Upper Midwest or by barge from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho for export.

David Grillot, Plant Manager for TEMCO explained that TEMCO is a joint venture between CHS and Cargill. It operates three export terminals in Tacoma, Portland and Kalama.

TEMCO's rail yard can accommodate four shuttles (about 450 rail cars). The loading dock has two ship loading spouts with a capacity of 120,000 bushels per hour each. The Kalama facility has 6.5 million bushels of storage capacity.

- 94 Concrete silos
- 12 Steel Tanks
- 8 Concrete shipping bins

TEMCO ships over 250 million bushels a year. Its biggest customer is Japan.

Under development is a proposal for a facility to generate methanol from natural gas, a \$1.8 billion investment with 220 full time jobs and up to 1,000 construction jobs. A lease/option is complete, the Port will provide land, dock and process water. Environmental review is in process.

[Port of Kalama](#)

[Transportation Footprint – SteelScape Kalama](#)

[TEMCO Kalama Terminal](#)

Port of Longview

Ashley Helenberg, Director of External Affairs, Port of Longview and Norm Krehbiel, Chief Operating Officer, Port of Longview, reported that the Port of Longview is third in revenue in Washington, after the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma. The cargo mix at the Port of Longview handles grain, potash, soda ash, calcined coke

Port invested \$21 million in rail construction and realignment on port property.

EGT is a \$230 million grain export investment. The rail loop allows six unit trains to stay on site.

The Port intends to develop Barlow Point, which is 275+ acres, prime waterfront on deep draft, zoned

industrial with master planning underway. Rail right-of-way extends to the port property.

Dan Bowden, Pacific Lumber and Shipping (PLS), an affiliate of Port Blakely Tree Farms. The company, founded in 1932, is a direct competitor with Weyerhaeuser. It has been the longest tenant of the Port of Longview. PLS has 47 acres surrounded by port property. PLS receives 39,000 trucks a year. It takes 3 – 5 days to load a ship. Logs arrive from Oregon on SR 433, from Washington on I-5. About 60% are from Washington and 75% from within a 50 mile radius. PLS sells to 600 customers in Asia.

[Port of Longview](#)

[Pacific Lumber](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

FIRE AND ICE SCENIC LOOP

Lisa Brosnan, with the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, spoke to the Commission about the Fire and Ice Scenic Loop. The project has many facets:

- Attract Visitors
- Interpret Natural Resources
- Increase Access to Recreational Opportunities
- Discover History and Culture
- Enhance Economic Vitality

Plan development was sponsored and funded by FHWA, with FHWA guidelines. The Project goals include:

- Increased number and length of visitor stays
- Enhanced user experience and safety
- Preservation of natural resources
- Increased opportunities for place-based education
- Increased recognition of our natural and cultural heritage

Partners include the U.S. Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument; Cowlitz County Tourism; Skamania County Chamber of Commerce; Cowlitz Economic Development Council; and the White Pass Scenic Byway.

Transportation recommendations include:

- Specific safety recommendations for each route
- Develop new signage for directions, distance, travel times, and safety warnings
- Explore a standardized rustic design for signage and guardrails

Culture, History and Outdoor Recreation recommendations include:

- Increase access to routes with recreational potential
- Expand walking and bicycling infrastructure

Adoption by the CWCOG board is anticipated for May 28. Next steps will address governance and plan implementation.



[Fire & Ice Scenic Loop Corridor Management Plan](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul W. Locke said that ferry routes should be cut.

Diane Dick said that the SR 432/433 project proposal should await the EIS report. The project as designed will not reduce road congestion.

Rosemary Siipola, with Southwest Washington Regional Airport (SWRA), reported that funding from Cowlitz County will help the airport extend the runway to 5000'. SWRA is a critical link in our state's transportation system and is also identified as a critical facility in the National Plan Integrated Airport System (NPIAS). As a regional general aviation airport it hosts approximately 90 aircraft (including 2 corporate jets), provide regional aviation based services such as jet fuel.

Ms. Siipola stressed that airports are the fourth R in the state's transportation system: roads, rail, rivers and runways.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ANNE E. HALEY, Chairman

JOE TORTORELLI, Vice-Chairman

RITA BROGAN, Member

DAN O'NEAL, Member

ROY JENNINGS, Member

MARY RIVELAND, Member

ABSENT

JERRY LITT, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL